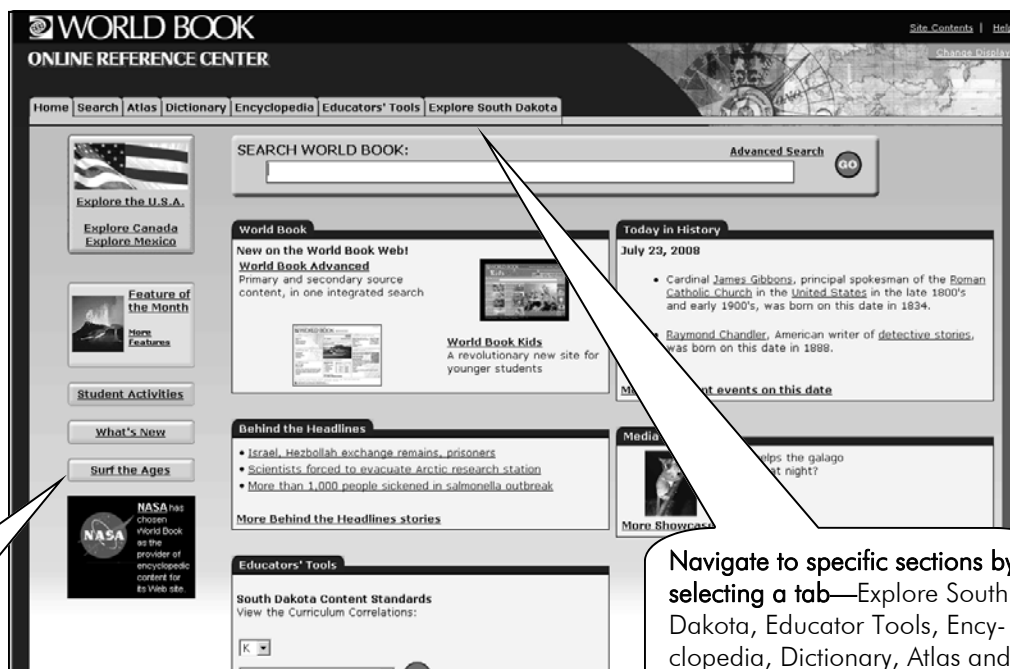


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Cat is a favorite pet of people around the world. Cats are intelligent and have an independent nature. These small animals can also be playful and entertaining. Many cats make affectionate, loyal pets, providing companionship for people of all ages. Tens of millions of cats are kept as pets worldwide.

The word *cat* also refers to a family of meat-eating animals that includes tigers, lions, and leopards. This family also includes *domestic cats*—that is, those that people keep as pets. Domestic cats and their wild relatives share many characteristics. All these animals have long, powerful bodies and somewhat rounded heads. They have short, strong jaws and 30 sharp teeth. Cats are also skillful hunters. They are able to catch other animals by approaching them swiftly and quietly on padded feet. Or they may wait motionless until an animal comes close and then spring upon it suddenly.

This article deals with domestic cats. These animals have many special physical abilities. They see better in dim light than people do. They can climb trees, run at a high speed, and leap long distances. Cats also have a keen sense of balance and gracefully follow the top of your head as they move around the room.

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